

Collections Blueprint: 80%+ recycling from HWRCs



Household waste recycling centres in Wrexham

Household waste recycling centres (HWRCs) play a vital role in helping the public sustainably manage waste that can't be collected by regular doorstep collection services. With a well-managed HWRC service, very little waste needs to be sent for disposal in landfill or incineration.

In recent years, a decision by Wrexham Borough Council and site contractors FCC Environment to change the way that HWRCs are perceived has contributed to its three sites recycling over 80 per cent, sometimes as high as 90 per cent, of everything brought in by the county's 130,000 population. This has played a key role in Wrexham achieving a recycling rate of 62.3 per cent in 2015/16.

The council has encouraged residents to stop seeing the sites as 'tips' and instead think of them as recycling centres. Increased scrutiny on residual waste being brought into sites and incentives for staff have seen buy-in from the public and staff, leading to the recycling rates rising from below 40 per cent in 2009 to current levels.

Clamping down on residual waste

As a major part of the experience for residents is interaction with staff, Wrexham decided that staff had to do more than point users in the right direction.

The whole process is now based around the initial 'meet and greet', with staff more engaged in finding out what waste residents have brought. When a member of the public enters, they are asked what they intend to put in the residual waste skip and whether any recyclables could be removed.

A screening workstation for sorting black bag waste before it is deposited is located behind the residual skip with extra containers for recyclables likely to be mixed with general waste. Most of the staff now attend to visitors at the front of the site, while a 'floating operative' keeps an eye out for contamination in the skips and monitors the compactors.

Out of around 20,000 people surveyed, only half a dozen minded being asked what was in their residual waste, and residents are encouraged to make their trip to the HWRCs shorter by sorting out recyclables at home.

Getting staff involved

Putting emphasis on staff interaction in the HWRC process has led to the Wrexham staff becoming more invested in the strategy of the site, and the council has encouraged this by providing training and giving operatives more information.

Each member of staff trains for an NVQ and is given internal competency training covering environmental and health and safety issues. When tonnages at the site fluctuate, staff members are able to use weekly spreadsheets to see where tonnages are increasing or decreasing and where recyclables may be





being lost in the residual stream. This allows them to make improvements or be more alert to contamination.

An incentive scheme further encourages operatives to thoroughly monitor waste, with all staff being given a bonus based on target recycling rates for each site. After introducing the scheme, Wrexham County Borough Council saw an immediate 10 per cent increase in recycling at its HWRCs.

Making it easier to recycle

Wrexham County Borough Council has redeveloped all of its sites so that using them is as easy as possible for residents. A key aspect of this is the layout design, such that bays for large volume materials are now split level, dropping containers below street level so that visitors can put larger or heavier items in the skips without climbing any stairs. This helps to make it easier for people to recycle and reduces risks caused by lifting heavy items and by trip hazards.

The number of residual waste skips at sites has been halved from four to two. Another key change to layout design is to relocate these to the front of the site, so that once residents' general waste has been screened, distributing recyclable loads is as simple as possible.

Clear signage is also necessary to ensure users know exactly where they are going and what can go in each skip. Each bay is clearly numbered and has signs in both English and Welsh.

New ways to make waste useful

After reducing the amount of residual waste being deposited at its HWRCs, Wrexham Council has worked to find outlets for the less-easily recycled materials that it collects. For example, a partnership with a carpet recycling company has added around three per cent towards the council's HWRC recycling targets. Carpet waste from Wrexham sites is taken to a company that shreds it, mixes it with sand and uses it for flooring at equestrian centres.

The sites have also been used to build public awareness of recycling and the waste hierarchy. Every year residents take up to 1,000 tonnes of free compost from the sites, all of which is made from food and garden waste collected by the council and processed at its in-vessel composting facility.

The council has also developed a reuse shop at its Bryn Lane site, selling items that have been brought to the centre to raise funds for a local school for children with learning difficulties.